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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 9 July 1997, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Galuska (Czech Republic), Mr. Henze (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

(a) MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO ALL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(agenda item 4 (a)) (continued) (E/1997/64, 66 and 94; E/1997/NGO/1)

Ms. KIRSCH (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, thanked the Secretary-General for his report (E/1997/66) and the practical recommendations it contained. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was a fundamental stage towards realizing full equality between men and women. The mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all United Nations policies and programmes should take place in the context of that implementation and serve as a model for implementation at the national level. It would be useful if the Council's agreed conclusions were preceded by a definition of the concept itself, since a degree of misunderstanding persisted throughout the system, together with a lack of technical expertise regarding matters pertaining to equality between the sexes.

Gender analysis was an essential tool in understanding the impact and effects of all United Nations programmes and policies. Ignoring the gender perspective led to an incomplete evaluation of problems and a misunderstanding of the obstacles to be overcome. The Council's discussion should centre on practical means of strengthening coordination throughout the system and facilitating the adoption of a gender perspective.

Implementing the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report would require both political and budgetary commitments. Translating theory into practice would demand adequate resources as well as technical capacity and expertise. In that context, she stressed the importance of staff training and improved recruitment techniques. Such training should be part of a wider strategy which would include guidelines for establishing incentive and accountability measures.

The process demanded continuing evaluation and commitment with responsibility beginning at the highest level. The role of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

was important in that regard. The mid-term review in 1998 by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Council of the Beijing Platform for Action would be an opportunity to examine the successes achieved and obstacles encountered.

The Commission on the Status of Women should act as a catalyst, drawing the attention of other bodies in the system to the impact of the perspective on matters as varied as political developments, security, armed conflict, human rights, drugs, crime and violence. In that context, she particularly welcomed the steps taken by the Division for the Advancement of Women and by the Centre for Human Rights to improve coordination and cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

The States members of the European Union remained concerned about the insufficient presence of women at the highest decision-making levels in the United Nations system. The recommendations and targets for increasing the number of women senior officials should be put into effect, including in fields such as peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy and economic and social development.

Mr. MWAKAWAGO (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, in addition to an in-depth analysis, the Secretary-General's report contained a number of useful recommendations which could assist Governments, the United Nations system and the private sector in integrating gender perspectives into their policies and programmes. Gender mainstreaming had been one of the main issues at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The States attending had underscored the need and importance of designing, implementing and monitoring effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, at all levels, that would foster the empowerment and advancement of women and the Platform for Action adopted had correctly emphasized the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

At the level of the United Nations system, the Group endorsed the recommendation that the General Assembly, its main committees and other subsidiary bodies, the specialized agencies and other international organizations, should take gender factors into consideration in their work. The effective implementation of the Platform for Action at the national level would require effective participation by Governments, non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) and civil society as a whole. Gender mainstreaming issues should be fully integrated into development policies and programmes, with due regard for the specific conditions of each country.

International assistance was called for in areas such as capacity-building, resource flows and transfer of technology in support of activities aimed at the empowerment of women in developing countries, particularly the African and least-developed countries (LDCs).

Improving the conditions of women in those countries demanded comprehensive measures on behalf of overall development, including the creation of economic opportunities for women. In that regard, international support in the form of adequate financial and human resources would have a direct impact on the overall development and empowerment of women in such countries. The creation of funding mechanisms such as micro-credit schemes would provide women with the capital needed to start and advance their own development projects. Since most developing countries lacked the resources to establish such schemes, the donor community should provide the requisite financial support and technical assistance. Meanwhile, steps should be taken to give women access to credit without restrictive conditions such as collateral requirements. Also, since mainstreaming would require building strong and relevant institutions at both national and international levels, the international community should assist the developing countries in their efforts to create focal points for gender issues.

The Secretary-General had committed himself to mainstreaming. To that end, the Commission on the Status of Women should be strengthened, especially in its role of coordinating gender issues within the United Nations system. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, the Division for Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) should all be reinforced, their support activities coordinated, and their reports made available to the Commission on the Status of Women.

The regional commissions had played an important role in the preparations for the Beijing Conference, having facilitated the preparation of the regional platforms for their respective areas. They thus had an important role in gender mainstreaming, which should be a major element of their work programmes. Increased financial support would be needed to enable them to fulfil that important task.

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China wished to emphasize that the overall purpose of gender mainstreaming was to ensure gender balance at all levels in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and other development programmes.

Mr. Yong-Shik HWANG (Republic of Korea) said that the United Nations had contributed greatly to the promotion of the status of women over the past decades. His Government welcomed especially the work of the Commission on Human Rights in connection with the elimination of violence against women and, more particularly, its appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the topic. United Nations work in that area was important, not only because violence was the most serious form of violation of women's rights, but also because its success or failure would provide a test case for coordinated cooperation among the different agencies of the United Nations system in mainstreaming the gender perspective into their policies and programmes.

Since coordination between the Commission on the Status of Women and the other functional commissions of the Council was essential to achieve the objective of enhancing women's status more effectively, his delegation supported the recommendation that INSTRAW and UNIFEM should submit their annual reports to the Commission on the Status of Women, while emphasis should be placed on capacity-building within the Secretariat. His Government accordingly supported the joint workshop organized between the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the OECD/DAC Expert Group for the purpose of reviewing their experiences in mainstreaming and sharing the lessons learned.

The gender balance of the United Nations Secretariat itself must also be addressed. Equal representation of women in decision-making would help the gender perspective to be better reflected in the policy-making process. It was disappointing, therefore, that, only three years before the target date for achieving 50 per cent representation of women in the Secretariat, no comprehensive statistical information on the subject was available.

His Government was continuing to work on mainstreaming the gender perspective in its national policies in accordance with its commitments at the Beijing Conference. As a follow-up to the Conference, a Women's Development Act had been promulgated in 1995 aimed at mainstreaming the gender perspective

at a national level by promoting gender equality and women's development in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. Focal points had also been established in all ministries to handle women's issues.

Mr. HYNES (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that the Fourth World Conference on Women had endorsed a global agenda for achieving women's equality by the year 2000. To carry out effectively its role of moral leadership, however, the United Nations system must first get its own house in order. A variety of challenges and approaches were involved. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes cut across the work of the entire system, making it precisely the type of issue that could benefit from coordination by the Council.

The basic proposition underpinning the concept of mainstreaming was straightforward: all policies and programmes throughout the system should be designed, implemented and evaluated with a constant and conscious view to their relative implications for women and men. The Council's discussion should focus on the steps needed to translate that proposition into practical action.

First and foremost, a clear and unqualified commitment was needed at the highest levels to the effort to promote equality. To encourage such a commitment at the intergovernmental level, the Council should recommend that the General Assembly direct all its main committees and subsidiary bodies to take gender factors into account in their work. It should also ensure that, in all review processes of global conferences, effective use was made of gender analysis in identifying further action to achieve gender equality. The Commission on the Status of Women had an important role to play by providing guidance to other commissions on the gender dimension of issues falling within their mandates.

In some parts of the United Nations system, the lack of clear intergovernmental mandates restrained the secretariats from adequately addressing gender concerns. The Secretary-General's recommendation that all functional commissions should adopt an express decision on mainstreaming should be followed, as should the suggestion made at the previous meeting that financial organs, both of the United Nations proper and of the specialized agencies, should be urged to support and protect resources allocated to gender-related programmes.

The human rights institutions of the United Nations had a particularly important role to play in advancing gender equality. The Commission on Human Rights had made a useful start by encouraging all human rights bodies to adopt a systematic gender perspective.

High-level engagement was the essential starting point and, in that regard, his delegation commended the expressed commitment of the Secretary-General and other senior officials. The Inter-Agency Committee and the Division for the Advancement of Women had central roles in translating that commitment into action. His delegation looked forward to a statement from the Inter-Agency Committee setting out a coordinated position on the advancement and empowerment of women and on gender mainstreaming. Managers throughout the system had a particular responsibility and should be held accountable for ensuring progress in gender mainstreaming. The Inter-Agency Committee should prepare a catalogue of accountability measures and report regularly on their implementation.

The representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) had spoken eloquently on the subject of managerial accountability for improving the representation of women at decision-making levels. Until that was done, mainstreaming and gender analysis would have a limited impact and appear little more than a hollow gesture.

While some progress had been made in the area of mainstreaming, much of it to date had been in the form of words. Ways had been suggested whereby different parts of the system could put those words into action through their everyday work. In so doing, they would make an important contribution to achieving the fundamental goals of the United Nations. Peace, justice and prosperity for all would not be achieved unless and until women everywhere became full and equal participants in society.

Ms. McNISH (Jamaica), having endorsed the statement by the spokesman for the Group of 77, said that there had been a shift away from seeing women as a vulnerable group and women's issues as marginal to the national and global agenda towards an approach that emphasized that the roles and responsibilities of both men and women needed to be factored into programmes and policy decision-making.

In Jamaica, gender equity was viewed as an important issue within the broad context of social equity, and achieving it had become a national

objective. Moreover, by committing itself to the Beijing Platform for Action, her Government had expressed its determination to ensure that a gender perspective was reflected in policies and programmes at all levels.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had established the mandates for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations system. The progress that had been made was catalogued in the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/66). While many of the Council's functional and regional commissions had already adopted resolutions calling for mainstreaming, they had been slow to translate those resolutions into practice. The tendency to define gender mainstreaming as concentration on women-specific issues must be eliminated and mechanisms established to integrate gender analysis in their work.

A supportive institutional framework, starting at the highest level, was a prerequisite for the implementation of gender-oriented policy and programme development. It was disappointing therefore that, according to the report, mainstreaming continued to be perceived by many as a special-interest issue largely identified with the recruitment of female staff. A clear and consistent approach must be developed to ensure that gender issues became a central focus of policy and development goals, and her delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations for the establishment of gender units and focal points as part of the Organization's institutional structure.

According to the report, gender issues with regard to operational activities were addressed mainly at the project level rather than in policy and programme formulation. Gender analysis should be applied throughout the process, including the planning, programming, evaluation and monitoring levels. There should be some prioritization at the intergovernmental level while, at field level, the priorities dictated by national requirements should reflect both national and international commitments.

In conclusion, her delegation supported all the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report and the call by the Commission on the Status of Women for the Council to present recommendations regarding further steps to ensure a common United Nations system-wide approach.

Mr. MORJANE (Tunisia) said that, as a result of legislative and institutional reforms, women in his country were full partners in the building of society and the promotion of development. His Government was implementing

a number of programmes to promote the advancement of rural women and girl children, and to provide vocational training for women in underprivileged urban areas in cooperation with UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF.

It believed that international solidarity was fundamental to reinforce the actions of Governments in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference, and it welcomed the measures taken by United Nations bodies to promote the mainstreaming of gender perspectives. The time was propitious for the system to open up its structures and ensure more representation for women, particularly in higher level posts.

As for the mobilization of the human and financial resources needed to support those activities, the relevant General Assembly resolutions, calling as they did for additional funding at both the national and international levels, should be given fuller effect. It was also to be hoped that other multilateral and regional bodies would participate in the economic and political emancipation of women, as major actors in sustainable development.

Ms. HEYZER (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that, regarding gender equality as a fundamental value in development, the UNIFEM regional advisers were playing a leading role in establishing inter-agency task forces to develop system-wide gender action plans in support of the resident coordinator system. In association with NGOs, they were building the capacity of women's groups to interact effectively with the United Nations system, and identifying critical emerging issues and strategies for addressing them.

UNIFEM offered a holistic perspective of the realities of women's lives and was forging links between regions and thematic areas. In the context of United Nations reform, UNIFEM perceived a number of opportunities for coordinating and advancing gender mainstreaming: the establishment of inter-agency thematic groups to provide meeting points for funds, programmes and specialized agencies; the drawing-up of national gender action plans and indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment; capacity-building to enable United Nations staff at the country level to formulate, implement and evaluate gender-sensitive programmes, in association with Governments and NGOs; multi-donor coordination mechanisms; standing advisory groups of gender experts from Governments, NGOs, women's groups and academic organizations; and the creation and maintenance of a roster of gender experts to supplement and consolidate agency rosters.

The United Nations reform process must take into account the leadership role of the Organization in supporting conference follow-up at the country level and recognizing and utilizing the contribution that gender equality could make to the solution of economic, social and political problems.

Mr. M.M. DLAMINI (Observer for Swaziland) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement by the spokesman for the Group of 77. It welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, and concurred with the recommendation in the report that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) should ensure that additional resources were made available for mainstreaming the gender perspective to all programmes. He hoped, in that connection, that all human and financial assistance required by the Special Advisor to fulfil her important role would be accorded to her within the regular budget.

Increased cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women and other parts of the United Nations system would be required to facilitate a comprehensive follow-up to all the major world conferences of the 1990s. As far as the composition of the Secretariat was concerned, every effort should be made to meet the 50/50 gender distribution goal at all levels by the year 2000. Practical mechanisms for monitoring progress on a regular basis should also be set up.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines), having commended the Secretary-General on his excellent report (E/1997/66), said that his Government was implementing a national strategy for mainstreaming, which it considered essential to the achievements of the goals of the Platform for Action. Coordinated action was, however, also required at the intergovernmental and institutional levels. Member States must provide clear and coherent policy guidelines, and progress towards the incorporation of mainstreaming as an integral part of the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies should be reviewed and appraised on a regular basis.

One key area for improvement was accountability, and the executive heads should play a more direct and active role in ensuring that mainstreaming targets and timetables were met. The Council could request governing bodies to include information on the number of staff trained in mainstreaming, and request the inclusion of all measurable indicators in their reports on the advancement of women. A coordinated approach should also be made by the

United Nations system to such issues as violence against women, the situation of the girl child, traffic in women and girls, and violence against women migrant workers.

His Government had increased its contribution to UNIFEM, and believed that the Fund's resources should be at least doubled to enable it to play the catalytic role recommended for it at the Beijing Conference.

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality had a crucial role within the United Nations system, but donors as well as agencies could assign funding authority through multi-agency field projects and activities by creating, where appropriate, a budget code on gender mainstreaming and systematically allocating resources across the board. Full use should also be made of NGO expertise, and experience in gender training should be shared within the United Nations system.

Ms. WILLIAMS (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that WHO, in applying a gender approach to health, examined such differences between women and men as exposure to risk, access to health care, rights and responsibilities, and control over their lives. The gender approach involved giving: more consideration to non-biological factors affecting women's health, such as social and economic status, and cultural, environmental, familial, occupational and political factors; more attention to all women's roles, not only those as wives and mothers; more attention to the roles and responsibilities of men in relation to women's health concerns; more involvement of men in bringing about change; and greater recognition and support for women as participants in the development of health care for themselves, their families, and their communities.

She agreed with previous speakers on the need to strengthen coordination among Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system as well as NGOs, private institutions and civil society. Health was an intersectoral issue, and WHO was seeking to strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones with relevant groups and agencies.

Ms. KOTOK (United States of America), having congratulated the Secretary-General on his excellent report (E/1997/66) which would serve as a guidebook to the subject, said her delegation agreed that mainstreaming required: commitment at the highest level; a clear policy statement

accompanied by institutional strategies; accountability or incentive systems to reinforce the importance of mainstreaming; recognition that gender issues needed to be addressed in areas traditionally viewed as technical or gender-neutral; staff capacity; and gender units with the technical capacity to provide guidance and vigorously pursue gender integration. Such units must, however, not be the only centres concerned with gender, or they would become instruments of marginalization. Mainstreaming the gender perspective throughout all United Nations policies and programmes would ensure that they were designed and implemented in a way that would benefit both men and women.

The mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the Federal Government of her country was being pursued through such instruments as the Inter-Agency Council on Women, established by the President in August 1995. With its high-level commitment, that Council had been measuring the policies and programmes of government agencies against the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, identifying new initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls, and introducing changes to ensure that the Beijing goals were integrated into the regular conduct of business. The Agency for International Development (USAID) had also established a working group on mainstreaming.

Although many United States agencies disaggregated some data by sex, there was as yet no uniform policy, and the Department of Agriculture had set up a working group to explore ways and means of analysing all data by sex. The Department of Education had also established a working group on mentoring to involve young people in implementing the Platform for Action.

Ms. WILHELMSEN (Observer for Norway) said that the Council had an important role to play in coordinating reports and recommendations aimed at mainstreaming gender issues into all United Nations policies and programmes. That process would be a demanding one and would require political commitment and willingness to translate policy into action on the part of the management and staff of every organization. Everyone concerned must realize that societies and organizations needed the knowledge and experience of both women and men.

The Secretary-General had a responsibility to allocate adequate resources to the mainstreaming process, ensure that effective tools were being utilized, monitor the situation and report thereon to the General Assembly.

By appointing a Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General, he had set an example for the entire Organization.

While focal points were useful organizational tools which could provide a resource centre for gender issues, management had the primary responsibility for the mainstreaming process. She therefore welcomed the section of the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/66, paras. 54-61) on capacity-building for mainstreaming and hoped that the next report would focus more closely on efforts to increase general staff competence on gender issues.

The report highlighted the positive aspects of the work of a number of United Nations funds and programmes and of the specialized agencies; however, it was important to present both good and bad experiences and practices as a background for Council discussions. Future reports should focus on practical steps taken, rather than policies adopted, by the various components of the United Nations system.

Her delegation supported the suggestion that a database for all United Nations activities should be established (para. 61) and the recommendation that overlapping between the sessions of the functional commissions engaged in follow-up to United Nations conferences, particularly the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, should be avoided. It also supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality should develop a standardized format for documenting and assessing mainstreaming experiences (para. 79). For its part, her country had recently adopted a new Strategy for Women and Gender Equality.

Ms. ACUNER (Turkey) said that her delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly should direct its committees and bodies to mainstream a gender perspective into their work and that the Council should strengthen and coordinate the work programmes of the functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies in that regard. The Division for the Advancement of Women, which acted as the secretariat for the Commission on the Status of Women, could contribute to that effort by providing its reports to other commissions, coordinating input through the ACC and directing inquiries to the appropriate United Nations bodies.

Her delegation supported the proposal to include a gender perspective in the Second Committee's Triennial Policy Review of the Operational Activities for the Development of the United Nations System and its consideration of macroeconomic questions, but thought that a gender perspective should also be incorporated into several of the Second Committee's agenda items. She welcomed closer cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM and the establishment of an Internet site, WomenWatch (para. 65), which would make it possible to provide information to women throughout the world.

The recommendation that the annual reports of INSTRAW and UNIFEM should be available to the Commission on the Status of Women (para. 97) would seem to be a duplication of effort, since both agencies reported to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, while INSTRAW also reported to the Council. Joint work plans in areas of common interest could be strengthened within the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001 and the established ACC mechanisms.

Her delegation welcomed the report of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW on its seventeenth session (E/1997/53) and the Secretary-General's report on ways and means to enhance the capacity of the Organization and the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (E/1997/64) and congratulated INSTRAW on its success in carrying out research and training activities despite limited resources and a reduced staff. Of particular importance were its activities in the areas of statistics and indicators on women; women, the environment and sustainable development; economic and political empowerment of women and participation in the Habitat II Conference.

She urged INSTRAW to cooperate more extensively with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the United Nations University and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

Her country's Ministry for Women's Affairs had undertaken mainstreaming strategies which had resulted in sound national policies and institutions to facilitate women's participation in social, economic, cultural and political life. However, women were not adequately represented in all sectors and many of the country's institutions were not yet gender-sensitive. The Ministry for Women's Affairs, the women's movement and NGOs were working to overcome those

obstacles in cooperation with the United Nations system, particularly the Resident Representative - Gender Programmes Focal Point of the United Nations Development Programme, which supported an institutional gender capacity-building programme in Turkey.

Mr. SRIVIHOK (Thailand) said that, while Article 8 of the United Nations Charter stipulated that the Organization should place no restriction on the eligibility of men and women to participate in its principal and subsidiary organs, it was not until the Beijing Conference that any real progress in gender mainstreaming had been made. Gender equality was a responsibility shared by both men and women, and it was important to change the attitudes, traditions and practices that had resulted in generations of inequality, to translate policies into action and to integrate a gender perspective into United Nations activities at every level.

The Secretariat had achieved its goal of 35 per cent representation of women in professional posts, but greater efforts were needed if the goal of 50 per cent representation overall and 25 per cent at the managerial level by the year 2000 was to be reached. However, it was important to ensure that recruitment, placement and promotion were also based on the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and that personnel policies were fair and transparent.

Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile) said that incorporation of a gender perspective into all United Nations policies and programmes was essential to the Organization's credibility and would facilitate the efforts of Governments to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. His delegation requested the Secretary-General to increase significantly the number of women throughout the United Nations system and, in particular, at the highest levels.

The work of the regional commissions was particularly important since it should serve as a catalyst in the cooperation between the United Nations system and governmental organizations and NGOs. The Commission on the Status of Women had also a key role to play. His delegation supported the idea of establishing terms of reference to determine the responsibilities of those charged with incorporating gender perspectives throughout the United Nations system. Translation of those policies into action would require qualified individuals and appropriate methodologies, and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality had a particular part to play in that regard.

His delegation was particularly concerned about incorporating a gender perspective into programmes to eliminate poverty and agreed with the Secretary-General that the Council had a major responsibility to monitor United Nations and Government activities in that regard. From 19 to 21 November 1997, Chile would host the seventh regional conference on the integration of women into the economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean, which would emphasize participation of women in decision-making and the elimination of poverty.

Lastly, he hoped that the Council would approve a proposal for the addition of five women members to the UNRISD Board, making it the first United Nations governing body with advisory functions to have a majority of women members.

Mr. SFEIR-YOUNIS (World Bank), speaking with regard to mainstreaming gender in non-traditional sectors, said that the Bank was attempting to move beyond the traditional sectors of health, education and development. Guidelines were being developed for the integration of gender issues into Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), which was essential if such issues were to be mainstreamed into all aspects of the Bank's lending programme.

Greater attention was also being given to gender dimensions in country, economic and sectoral work, which provided the analytical foundations for Bank policy formulation and project lending. At the operational level, all regions had prepared Regional Gender Action Plans, which provided a diagnosis of gender issues and a definition of strategies and priorities. Methods were being developed to identify potentially-complex issues in the areas of poverty and gender.

While over 50 per cent of the Bank's lending operations for 1996 in the areas of agriculture, education, population, health and nutrition had included gender components, none of the electricity and power projects had included any discussion of gender in the project appraisal documents, and only 2 of the 26 transport projects had done so. Initiatives taken in 1996 in order to develop the tools to address gender in infrastructure operations included an Asia Regional Gender Symposium and a Rural Travel and Transport Programme in Africa. The Bank agreed with the Secretary-General's statement that mainstreaming and targeting were not mutually exclusive.

The Bank was undergoing a major reorganization, including the creation of four networks designed to make its expertise, experience and resources available to its own staff, client countries, the United Nations system and other development partners. It had also established a Gender Family under its Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, which would assist in mainstreaming gender into macroeconomic policy formulation by providing incremental funds for promoting gender research and operational tools and frameworks and by making all Bank information and experience on gender easily accessible. A Gender Family website was being tested internally and would soon be available as a complement to the existing WomenWatch Site sponsored by the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM.

The Bank was also focusing on a number of gender studies and initiatives aimed at improving the macro- and micro-policy environment, expanding girls' enrolment in school, improving women's health and participation in the labour force and expanding women's options in agricultural development, including access to services and credit.

Mr. CRUZ DE MELLO (Brazil) said he noted the positive efforts made by the United Nations system to put gender issues into their proper perspective. His own Government, too, was involved in a range of programmes aimed at fostering the full and equal participation of women in all sectors of national life. As part of a programme to combat violence against women, legislation had been duly amended and rape had been reclassified as a "crime against the human person" and thus liable to much heavier sanctions. Furthermore, information on the situation of women and the problem of violence had been collected and publicized.

The Brazilian Congress, which considered equality and the protection of human rights to be a prerequisite for democracy, had established quotas to ensure greater participation by women in the electoral process: at least 15 per cent of a party's candidates had to be women.

A national women's health programme had been initiated in line with the Cairo and Beijing recommendations on reproductive health rights. The role of the National Council of Women's Rights in formulating and monitoring public policies was also being strengthened. In school curricula, the importance of equality between women and men was being emphasized in order to foster a change in cultural attitudes.

The document "Strategies for Equality", prepared as a result of consultations between members of the administration and NGOs, highlighted the need to fight against women's poverty and to ensure adequate treatment of gender issues in the mass media.

The Secretary-General's recommendations (E/1997/66) should be implemented as a matter of urgency and a gender perspective should be mainstreamed at all levels in all entities of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions. The regional commissions should play a catalytic role, and the funds and programmes should be encouraged to include in their country reports assessments of the progress made in mainstreaming.

It was to be hoped that the central goal of achieving gender balance throughout the United Nations system (regardless of the nature of funding) would be reflected in Track Two of the reforms, and that the Council would be providing some guidelines to the Secretary-General in that regard.

Mr. A.K. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), having commended the Secretary-General's excellent report (E/1997/66), said that his Government attached special importance to gender perspective mainstreaming which was an essential means for ensuring the empowerment and advancement of women as well as gender equality. That cross-sectoral issue had moved gradually into the centre stage of programme policies. The Secretary-General's initiative to appoint more women to high-level posts in the United Nations system was to be applauded. Those measures must also be extended to the field and country levels, which had a critical role to play in implementing major programmes and in providing support and guidance to national mechanisms responsible for women's issues. More women should be appointed as resident coordinators.

Representation from developing countries must be ensured so that the system-wide process would not be denied the depth and diversity of their experience. The principles of equitable geographical representation and gender balance were in no way incompatible with the need for a high standard of professional expertise.

The Council should assume the lead role in coordinating and monitoring the process in all its functional bodies, particularly in the implementation of the outcomes of the major international conferences.

There should be more effective involvement and leadership by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) and its Gender in Development (GID)

Subgroup. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations (E/1997/66) and hoped that they would be reflected in Track Two of his reform proposals.

While the Council and the General Assembly would be providing overall policy guidance, the Commission on the Status of Women (which had been entrusted with monitoring the follow-up to the Beijing Conference) should play a catalytic role.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had rightly called for additional protocols focusing on gender mainstreaming to the memoranda of understanding signed by the agencies. The various cooperation agreements signed by the United Nations system with intergovernmental organizations should also include gender mainstreaming as an area of attention, and the regional commissions must give a higher priority to the issue.

Capacity-building for institutionalizing mainstreaming was crucial. It required the development of competence through training, the establishment of a gender resource base, effective management capabilities and mobilization of adequate resources. It was high time the international financial institutions, including the World Bank, exhibited a more pro-active commitment in that regard.

Bangladesh would abide fully by the commitments it had made at Beijing to achieve gender equality at all levels. In addition to a separate ministry for women's affairs, the country also had a separate unit in each administrative department for "Women in Development" programmes. The Government had also adopted a National Women's Development Policy for the equality, empowerment and advancement of women.

Success of micro-credit programmes in Bangladesh in engendering women's empowerment in the family and in society at large were being replicated in many countries and should be suitably incorporated into United Nations programmes.

Mr. ACHA (Observer for Peru) said that his Government had recently established a Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Human Development and hoped to receive international support for its programmes for the elimination of extreme poverty, an issue closely related to that Ministry's mandate.

While gender perspectives were essentially intersectoral, it was important to avoid duplication and overlapping. The Commission on the Status of Women was the appropriate forum for the Council's discussion of

gender-related issues, and the General Assembly should limit discussion of those issues to one of its main committees rather than two. On the other hand, there were various gaps in the functional commissions' policy recommendations on gender, not least in the areas of crime prevention and criminal justice, human rights, sustainable development and the legal and social status of women. The Council should make recommendations aimed at correcting that situation while preserving the multidisciplinary nature of the gender issue.

He welcomed the fact that UNDP, UNFPA, WFP and UNICEF had already incorporated a gender perspective into their activities. However, the resulting policies must be translated into action. Of particular importance was the work of UNDP and UNIFEM; in view of the latter's broad scope of activities, its resources should be increased. It was also important that a gender perspective be incorporated into the development of social policies with the support of the international financial institutions.

His Government had undertaken a number of activities to improve the social integration and economic and political status of displaced, illiterate and undocumented women and had established a programme to provide micro-credit to women from the poorest sectors of society.

Ms. BOZHKOVA (Observer for Bulgaria) said that her delegation supported the action-oriented recommendations of the Secretary-General (E/1997/66). Coordination on gender issues must indeed be system-wide to ensure that all United Nations activities fully reflected the situation of men and women and made gender-based disadvantages visible. Equality provided the key to transforming global and national agendas for achieving democratization and sustainable, people-centred development.

Her delegation supported the recommendation that all United Nations bodies and functional commissions should adopt a decision on mainstreaming a gender perspective in their work. Adequate resources were, however, needed to ensure that well-intentioned policies were translated into reality. Interaction between the chairpersons of functional commissions and the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women should also be encouraged and the other functional commissions should take proper account of the work of that Commission and of the Commission on Human Rights in the area of women's rights. Regional commissions should also be urged to implement systematically their recent decisions on mainstreaming a gender perspective. It was also

important to create mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming concepts and mission statements with a view to ensuring the necessary accountability.

Mr. EGHLIM (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Beijing Conference had created a new momentum for concerted action at the national and international levels to promote the status of women throughout the world. Mainstreaming of the gender perspective and an enabling environment for development were inextricably linked, and that should be reflected in the Council's agreed conclusions.

Existing resources could not be relied upon for the implementation of mainstreaming activities and additional global efforts needed to be made to mobilize financial and technical resources for capacity-building in developing countries, which would contribute to the advancement of women.

The Charter called for the appointment of people of the highest merit while recognizing the need for equitable geographical distribution. That principle was rarely, however, implemented in practice and consequently, though supporting a gender balanced distribution of United Nations posts, his delegation was not optimistic that there would be any substantive changes. His delegation also believed that United Nations staff should be more representative of the various cultures and philosophical convictions of the peoples of the Member States.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) reiterated the Fund's commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through country programmes, with a view to achieving their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities. In its follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, UNICEF had identified girls' education, the health of girls, adolescents and women, and the rights of children and women as priorities.

Numerous lessons could be learned from the UNICEF experience. A conceptual and operational framework had been found to be particularly important at country level. The Women's Equality and Empowerment Framework, the life-cycle approach and the links between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provided the normative framework for mainstreaming gender issues in programme preparation.

A systematic strategy for capacity-building, including a field-tested gender training package for staff, a global network of gender resource persons and periodic assessments, had been found to be essential to building competencies for gender analysis and programme planning within UNICEF staff and among governmental and non-governmental agencies at all levels. Materials and methodologies had been adapted to a range of specific countries.

Training linked to technical support and facilitated by a network of gender resource persons had resulted in the setting of gender-sensitive goals and specific actions for the elimination of gender-based disparities, particularly in the fields of health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation.

The establishment of regional networks of gender focal points within UNICEF had been a prerequisite for building knowledge networks and ensuring that the best practices were shared.

Despite the overall progress made, challenges which still needed to be tackled included the need for creative materials and methodologies for ensuring a broader understanding of the role of men and the dynamics of gender roles within the family, and the need to identify practical ways of translating theoretical concepts into concrete actions at the community level through clear programme guidance and "hands on" application of tools by staff at all levels.

UNICEF was currently engaged in integrating the gender perspective into its programme guidelines within a human rights-based approach, with a view to simplifying the introduction of programmes for mainstreaming gender issues in national and sub-national development plans.

UNICEF supported the setting up of statistical information systems disaggregating data by gender and age to aid national programme planning and the monitoring of progress. Women's groups and civil society had already used such indicators for resource mobilization, enabling communities to participate actively in helping to change the attitudes of families and the perceptions of education service management.

UNICEF would continue its commitment to mainstream a gender perspective in all its policies and programmes. The Council's current deliberations would no doubt help strengthen intergovernmental and inter-agency collaboration on that crucial issue.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.